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UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ROSA L. DELAURO

3RD DISTRICT, CONNECTICUT

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FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION,
AND RELATED AGENCIES

October 21, 2015

The Honorable Michael Froman
United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Ambassador Froman,

Over two weeks ago, on October 5, 2015 you announced that the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal has been finalized. However, Members of Congress have still not received the text of the completed TPP agreement and its Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) chapter. The only information that Members of Congress have received has come through news reports and leaks to the media. On October 15, 2015 *Inside US Trade* quoted you as saying, "the [TPP] chapter on [SPS] measures is subject to dispute settlement and also contains a "rapid-response mechanism." This gives us cause for alarm.

In a July 21, 2015 letter to you, I asked you to make a public commitment to support a negotiating position that will not enter the U.S. into any trade agreement that will conflict with our domestic catfish inspection laws. Your response on September 3, 2015 underscored your commitment to "ensure compliance with applicable U.S. laws and regulations concerning food safety." Yet, rapid-response mechanisms such as the one you alluded to last week serve to give favor to foreign importers – enabling them to circumvent our food safety laws and put pressure on domestic food safety agencies already hard strapped to conduct foreign import food inspections within tight budgets.

Public health and food safety must be a top priority in any trade agreement that we enter, including the TPP. Americans depend on government to ensure the safety of their food supply. Already, we face a tsunami of seafood imports from developing countries like Vietnam and Malaysia. This imported fish and shellfish is far cheaper than domestic alternatives, in part because of weaker safety standards in those countries. For example a recent survey found that every single catfish farm in Vietnam was using antibiotics that are banned in the United States. Fish in these farms commonly swim in slurries of dirty water, unhealthy chemicals, and their own filth. Unfortunately, the Food and Drug Administration only has the resources to inspect around two percent of seafood imports. Even at these low levels, the inspectors are turning away large amounts of seafood from Vietnam and Malaysia every year because of dirt, decomposition, banned drugs, illegal additives, and salmonella, among other concerns.

We have a responsibility to ensure that our nation's food supply is safe—including imported seafood. I urge you to adhere to our promise to protect American consumers. Furthermore, I ask you to make the text of the chapter on sanitary and phytosanitary measures publically available so we can confirm that you are not entering the U.S. into any trade agreement that will conflict with our domestic catfish and broader food safety inspection laws.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rosa L. DeLauro". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress